

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope of This Manual

The primary purpose of this **Physical Tasks Training Manual** is to present the core curriculum and design specifications for the portions of the Adult Corrections Officer Core Course that pertain to the performance of physically demanding tasks. This information is essential for training providers and instructors for the presentation of the Physical Tasks Unit (#22). It is also of significant benefit to local corrections departments in the selection and training of new adult corrections officers. Furthermore, candidates for the position may find the information in this manual of benefit as they prepare to apply for the corrections officer job. The manual is to be used in conjunction with the Adult Corrections Officer Core Training Course Manual, revised 2000.

Note: *This manual can be downloaded from the Board of Corrections web site: www.bdcorr.ca.gov.*

Goals of the Physical Tasks Training Curriculum

Unit #22 of the Adult Corrections Officer Core Course serves two major goals: Specifically it,

- 1) provides trainees instruction on physically demanding job tasks, an opportunity to practice techniques, and ways to improve their abilities to perform these tasks; and,
- 2) is a process to assess the trainee's current capability with regard to the performance of physically demanding job tasks.

While not the primary goal of the curriculum, the training affords trainees an opportunity to develop a personal routine that they can pursue on their own (after placement in the corrections officer position) to maintain and improve their ability to perform job-related physical tasks.

Job Relatedness

The curriculum addresses physical capabilities of major importance for performance of physically demanding adult corrections officer job tasks. The curriculum provides comprehensive coverage of all the major job-related physical capabilities for the majority of adult corrections officers statewide.

Four of the practical exercises are close simulations of actual corrections officer job tasks and serve as the program's assessment goal (i.e., they serve as tests as well as exercises). Benchmark minimum performance levels have been established for these four tests. These benchmark minimums are required levels. Most trainees will be able to exceed them, and should be encouraged to do so, just as they will be encouraged on the job to do more than simply meet minimum requirements.

Based on the tasks for the adult corrections officer position, as determined by the statewide job analysis study of corrections officers, these tests are job-related. The benchmark minimums on these tests correspond to minimum, on-the-job task performance standards that have verified statewide applicability for adult corrections officer positions. Therefore, these four designated tests and benchmark minimums are valid and meaningful tests of trainees' abilities to meet typical minimum physical requirements for the adult corrections officer job. The tests determine whether one can perform these important job tasks at a minimally acceptable level. Training providers who wish to issue a Core Course Completion certificate may only issue the certificate to those trainees who meet the statewide benchmarks on these four tests.

Physically Demanding Tasks

The 1999-2000 job analysis research that preceded the revision of this curriculum identified the following physically demanding tasks common to the majority (more than 50%) of adult corrections officers in the state.

- Pursue inmates on foot (running).
- Run to the scene of a disturbance or emergency.
- Carry heavy objects (for example, disabled or unconscious inmate or piece of equipment).
- Lift heavy objects (for example, disabled or unconscious inmate or piece of equipment).
- Drag heavy objects (for example, disabled or unconscious inmate or piece of equipment).
- Climb one or more flights of stairs.
- Run up one or more flights of stairs.
- Run down one or more flights of stairs.

While the training in Unit #22 assists in the overall preparation and basic skill ability to perform the following tasks, the specific techniques for performing these tasks are covered in other units of the training, mainly in Unit #8, Assaultive Behavior and Restraint Techniques and Unit #20, Emergency Procedures.

It is imperative that the physical tasks training instructors know the tasks and performance standards to which each test and benchmark minimum corresponds. The instructors must be able to explain the linkages to trainees and be prepared to answer trainees' questions about them. Also, if a trainee is having difficulty meeting the benchmark minimums, the instructor's ability to explain their direct connection with minimum job performance standards (to communicate their "real life" importance) will be critical to helping the trainee deal realistically with the problem.

Considerations for Employers – Agency Specific Needs

The benchmark minimums in the core course are translations of the typical minimum performance levels found to be applicable across the full range of agencies participating in the STC Program. Thus, by meeting the benchmark minimums, trainees demonstrate that they are able to meet typical statewide minimum performance requirements on physically demanding tasks.

Whether meeting the benchmark minimums in the core course also indicates a trainee's ability to meet a specific agency's local performance requirements depends on how that agency's local standards compare to the statewide performance requirements.

It is imperative that local agencies not confuse the benchmark minimums utilized in the statewide core course with the specific job requirements for their particular agency. It clearly would be inappropriate to terminate an employee based on standards that do not apply to the particular agency by which they have been hired. For example, if an agency has no facility with stairs, or does not require corrections officers to climb stairs in making their rounds or getting to the scene of an emergency, then the benchmark minimum for the Stair Walk Test would be difficult to defend as an absolute requirement for job entry with that particular agency.

In circumstances where the statewide performance requirements are the same as the local performance requirements and an individual trainee is unable to meet all the benchmark minimums, agencies should evaluate the situation on a case-by-case basis. A trainee should not be automatically disqualified from placement in the adult corrections officer position for failure to meet benchmark minimums. The determination of how to handle the situation is made by the employing agency. The evaluation might include such considerations as the following:

- Is additional practice likely to bring the employee's performance up to the benchmark minimum(s)? If so, and if additional practice time is administratively feasible, the employer may consider providing that opportunity.
- Is the employing agency obligated under applicable statutes and/or regulations to make reasonable accommodation for an adult corrections officer who may be unable to meet minimum performance standards on the particular task(s) associated with the benchmarks in question? The employer needs to consider the issue of accommodation on a case-by-case basis.

Testing Approach

There are four work simulation tests in the Physical Tasks Training Unit. These are as follows:

Behavior Skill Test #35: Complete a 50-yard sprint within 20 seconds.

Behavior Skill Test #36: Demonstrate ability to drag a 165 lb. weight (dummy) for a distance of 20 feet or more over a carpeted or flat, mowed grass surface within 30 seconds.

Behavior Skill Test #37: Demonstrate ability to walk a total distance of 75 feet (three 25-foot laps) within 30 seconds wearing a 30 pound airpack or weighted backpack.

Behavior Skill Test #38: On a flat course starting 15 yards back from a flight of stairs or bleacher steps, walk or jog the 15 yards, climb up 10 steps, then turn, climb back down the steps, and walk briskly or jog back to the starting point within 30 seconds.

These tests are to be evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

The testing portion of the curriculum in the core course provides, through the benchmark minimums, a post-hire standard that agencies may require their trainees to meet as a condition to placement in the permanent corrections officer position.

Medical Screening

A medical clearance should be required as a prerequisite to participation in the Physical Tasks Training Unit.

If the trainee has undergone a medical examination and the examining physician identified contraindicators to the trainee's participation in some portion of the training, find out what expectations the hiring agency has in terms of accommodation being made for the trainee.

Note: Sample Medical Screening Guidelines that describe the Physically Demanding Tasks of the adult corrections officer are available from the Board of Corrections.

Role of the Provider

In addition to the usual requirements of being a training provider that delivers an STC certified course, delivery of the physical tasks training demands specific areas of attention. For instance, the provider must arrange for appropriate facilities and equipment to support the physical tasks training. This includes adequate space, proper running and exercise surface, mats, water, stopwatches, display clocks, first aid and CPR equipment, cell phones or portable communication equipment (in case of injury off-site) and many other details necessary for a safe and effective training environment. Providers should not leave these details to the instructor as the provider may need to purchase additional equipment, arrange for their daily availability and proper maintenance. Further, the provider must develop appropriate safety guidelines for the physical tasks training and adequately brief staff and trainees on these guidelines.

Besides logistical support for training delivery, providers must assess the instructor-to-trainee ratio to make sure the trainees are receiving adequate supervision during the training and to allow enough time for the instructor to administer the work simulation tests. If necessary, providers should consult with STC to determine how best to incorporate appropriate staffing levels into the approved course budget.

Providers also need to work closely with their physical tasks training instructors to make sure the instructors are clear on the expectations and conditions of the training. Providers should insist that each physical tasks training instructor read this entire manual before developing their lesson plan and before instructing trainees.

The provider should take great care in selecting the physical tasks training instructor since there are many nuances to a successful delivery of this section of the core course and there is a risk of physical injury to the trainees. It is advisable to select instructors who have completed formal training in the area of physical skills performance. A listing of possible instructor training organizations is included in Appendix F.

The provider should also work closely with the instructors to ensure a positive learning environment for physical tasks training. The informal nature of physical tasks training may create a more relaxed atmosphere than a classroom setting. Providers should work with their instructors to make sure that professionalism is continued throughout all aspects of the course including the physical tasks training portion. (Please see the Handbook on Presenting Core Courses, Issues in Course Delivery, Sexual Harassment and Inappropriate Comments by Instructors.)

The provider must also maintain a close communication link with the trainee's employing agency with regard to physical tasks training. This includes making sure proper medical screening has been conducted prior to training, expectations by the agency are clear to both the provider and the trainee, and regular feedback is provided to the employer with regard to the trainee's performance.

Within 30 days of course completion, the provider is responsible for submitting the results of the work simulation tests (as well as other course tests) to the employer. Tests results should be reported on the standardized STC test result report form for physical tasks (included in Appendix A). Each work simulation test is listed as a Behavior Skills Test and must be given a pass or fail grade. If the test was not administered, this must also be reported. In the case of a trainee who is unable to pass the work simulation tests, it is important that the provider report the results of the testing and not interpret or predict how the employer will handle the situation. Instructors should also be advised to refrain from interpretation as well.

Core course completion certificates may not be issued to any trainee who has not successfully completed the course and passed all the tests in the course.

Role of the Instructor

As the instructor of the physical tasks training unit, the instructor has two roles to serve, that of "coach" and that of "official observer" (monitor).

In the coaching role, the instructor:

- maximizes the trainees' individual abilities to handle the physical demands of the job;
- minimizes the potential for training-related injuries; and,
- teaches trainees methods they can pursue on their own (after placement in the corrections officer position) to continue to maintain and improve their job-related physical capabilities.

In the official observer role, the instructor:

- determines whether trainees can demonstrate the benchmark minimum performance standards for physically demanding job tasks;
- documents performance on the work simulation tests; and,
- monitors compliance with the provider's safety guidelines.

Role of the Trainee

Trainees are responsible for performing all practice sessions to improve their ability to perform job-related physical tasks to the best of their ability. They must practice within the provider's safety guidelines to ensure and safeguard their own medical wellness.

Trainees also may be asked to take responsibility for helping each other during the sessions, especially when they are rotating through sessions in small groups. This includes: being cooperative; timing each other on the exercises with time limits; giving each other feedback on how they are doing; and, being equitable in sharing equipment and facilities.

Role of the Employer

Prior to enrolling the trainee in the course, employers should conduct a medical screening by an examining physician who is familiar with the types of activities the trainee will be engaged in during the course.

The employing agency should make sure each trainee who participates in the core course has been given a proper orientation to the physical tasks training several weeks prior to course attendance. This includes advising the employee that exercise clothing and shoes will be required during the course as well as explaining the employer's expectations with regard to participation. Employers may find it helpful to provide each employee sections of the physical tasks training manual that pertain to the specific activities the trainee will be performing during the course.

Employers should make every effort to familiarize themselves with the provider's approach to physical tasks training. This might include an on-site visit to the course to observe the training. As with any aspect of the core course, employers should maintain regular and clear communication with the provider as to expectations and trainee performance while the course is in progress.